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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for conducting auctions on the internet, the method comprising:

receiving over a communication network, by an auction node -communication handler program executing on a networked host computer, information from a first entity poster corresponding to an item for auction, the information received via the communication network from the first entity including (i) a designation of [[a]] an item category, selected from a list of item categories, under which the item for auction is to be listed, and (ii) input relating to scheduling an auction for the item;

processing at the auction node at least a portion of the received information into a presentation format by a database-to-presentation format formatting program, the presentation format including an indication of the category of the item for auction;

based at least in part on the category designation and auction scheduling information previously received from the first entity poster automatically initiating an instance of an ascending-bid auction process to conduct an auction for the item over the Internet from the auction node,

wherein the automatically initiated auction process conducts the auction to completion by performing operations including:

presenting the depiction of the item in the presentation format to a plurality of potential buyers;

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receiving at the auction node~~host computer~~ one or more bids on the
auctioned item from one or more bidders; ~~and~~ and
terminating the auction after a predetermined time.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein the input relating to the scheduling of an auction for the item is a remote invocation of the auction process at the auction node by the remote entity operation of a computer executing a posting terminal program further comprising:

~~receiving at the host computer payment information from a winning bidder;~~
~~passing the received payment information from the host computer to an external clearinghouse; and~~
~~receiving at the host computer a response from the external clearinghouse that payment has cleared.~~

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein the first entity is a consignment node operator wherein the consignment node operator has physical possession of the item for auction and is an authorized seller of the item for auction.~~database to presentation format formatting program comprises a database to worldwide web mapping module.~~

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein the first entity is a posting terminal user in which the item is outside the control of the auction node.~~further comprising:~~
~~receiving payment information from a winning bidder via a worldwide web page server executing on the host computer.~~

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14 wherein the auction node accepts items for auction from the first entity over the communications network without verifying that the first entity has physical possession of the item for auction.~~further comprising:~~
~~processing the received payment information with a transaction processor to debit an account identified by the payment information.~~

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16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14 wherein the auction node accepts items for auction from the first entity over the communications network without verifying that the first entity has control of the item for auction further comprising:

associating the received payment information with the bid received from the winning bidder.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14 wherein a central operating authority of the auction node detects fraud and revokes authorization to the first entity to electronically present items for auction at the auction node; the payment information identifies a credit card account.

18 (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein the information received from the first entity poster includes subjective descriptive information concerning the item for auction within the information transmitted by the first entity and received by the auction node, and the auction node presents the subjective descriptive information concerning the item for auction to the potential buyers without further review by an auction node operator a price for the auction item.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~11~~ 18 wherein a central operating authority of the auction node imposes a quality and performance structure on the first entity and if the first entity fails to meet the imposed quality and performance structure the central operating authority of the auction node may revoke the license to use the auction node by the first entity the presentation format comprises a hypertext markup language format.

20. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of conducting auctions on the internet at an auction node that coordinates via the internet with an remote application program executing at a computer operated by a remote entity, the method comprising:
transmitting from the auction node information about an item category structure maintained at the auction node to the computer operated by the remote entity for storage in a data repository that is subsequently accessible by the remote application program executing on the

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computer operated by the remote entity while the remote application program is not in network communication with the auction node;

receiving an asynchronously created data record from the remote application program operated by the remote entity, the asynchronously created dated record providing an item category selection from the data repository containing information about the category structure of the auction node, the data record further containing a descriptive short title of an item from the remote entity and a subjective characterization of the item from the remote entity, the data record being capable of storage at the data repository associated with the computer operated by the remote entity for subsequent scheduled or manual transmission to the auction node over the internet;

~~receiving, by a communication handler process executing on a host computer, information from a poster about an item to be auctioned, the received information including (i) a designation of a category, selected by the poster from a list of categories, under which the item is to be auctioned, and (ii) input relating to scheduling an auction for the item;~~

~~generating a tracking identifier to identify the item to be auctioned;~~

processing at least a portion of the received data record information to create a presentation format corresponding to the item to be auctioned, the presentation format including an indication of the category of the item to be auctioned;

based at least in part on the received category designation and the data record auction scheduling information, automatically initiating an instance of an auction process at the auction node to conduct an auction for the item over the Internet, the auction process automatically conducting an auction for the item to completion by:

presenting the presentation format to a plurality of internet participants;

receiving one or more bids for the item from one or more internet bidder participants; and

terminating the auction upon occurrence of a predetermined condition; and

~~providing to a winning internet participant instructions for sending payment information to pay for the auctioned item.~~

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20 wherein conducting an auction for the item comprises opening an auction process to participants on the internet; and further

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comprising automatically closing the auction process to the internet participants based on a predetermined condition.

22. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20 further comprising:
verifying and accepting a data record from the remote application program and for each successfully posted data record
generating a unique tracking code for each item receiving the bid for the auctioned item
via a world wide web page server interface.

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20 further comprising:
approving authorization to access the auction node by an identification code and a password code in the data header received from the remote application program that is executing on the computer operated by the remote entity receiving payment information from the participant, the payment information being associated with the bid.

24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20 further comprising:
determining from the data record received from the remote application program
executing on the computer operated by the remote entity whether the item represented by the data record is designated for an auction process or a fixed priced offering at the auction node
receiving from the participant payment information identifying a credit card account, passing the credit card account information to a clearinghouse and receiving authorization from the clearinghouse that payment with the credit card has cleared.

25. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20 further comprising:
receiving a de-post command from the remote application program executing on the computer operated by the remote entity; and
determining from a data record for the item maintained by the auction node whether to remove the item from the auction or fixed price process at the auction node in response to the received de-post command from the data record receiving payment information from the

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~~participant, clearing the payment information, and transferring legal ownership of the item to the participant.~~

26-32. (Canceled)

33. (Previously Presented) A computer-implemented system for conducting auctions on the internet, the system comprising:

an auction item presentation means for presenting items for auction to bidding participants connected via the internet, the auction item presentation means presenting items for auction arranged into item categories, each item for auction being associated with an item category designated by a poster of the item to be auctioned;

an auction process means for executing an auction process to automatically conduct an auction for the item based at least in part on the designated category and scheduling information received from the poster prior to initiation of the auction;

an auction bid recipient means for receiving, during the auction process, at least one bid on an item being presented by the auction item presentation means; and

payment recipient means for receiving payment information from a bidding participant, the payment information corresponding to the item for which the bid was received.

34. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33 further comprising payment verification means for passing received payment information to an external clearinghouse for verification.

35. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33 wherein the auction item presentation means comprises a database-to-presentation formatting program for mapping information from a database into a worldwide web format.

36. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33 further comprising:
a transaction processor to debit an account identified by the payment information if the received bid is approved.

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37. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33 wherein the received payment information identifies a credit card.

38. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 36 wherein the payment information identifies a credit card and wherein the transaction processor charges the credit card for the payment associated with the approved bid.

39. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33 wherein the auction item presentation means presents the auction item information as a markup language page.

40. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented auction participant system for enabling participation in an online auction conducted over a packet-switched network, the auction participants including posters of items to be auctioned and bidders on the items to be auctioned, the system comprising:

an auction item receiving means for receiving a page of information from a poster, the received page of information including one or more items available for auction, poster-specified auction scheduling information and a poster-specified designation of one or more item categories with which the items for auction are associated;

an auction process means for executing an auction process to automatically conduct an auction for the one or more items based at least in part on the category designation and the scheduling information received from the poster prior to initiation of the auction;

an auction bid input means for inputting a bid for at least one of the items presented by the poster and for inputting payment information associated with the bid; and

bid ~~processing transmission~~ means for processing ~~transmitting the bid and payment~~ information from a winning bidder via the packet-switched network to an account maintained by the computer-implemented auction participant system for the poster ~~a remote bid processor system.~~

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41. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 40 wherein the received page comprises a markup language page and wherein the auction item receiving means comprises a web browser connected via the internet to a server at the remote bid processor system.

42. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 40 wherein the payment information identifies a credit card provided by the winning bidder to pay for the item in the amount of the bid.

43. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented system for auctioning a uniquely identified item over a packet-switched network, the system comprising:

a database of data records, each data record relating to an item and comprising an identifier to uniquely identify the item and an item category under which the item is to be offered for auction, each data record including information specified by and received from a poster of the item, the poster-specified information including a item category designation and auction scheduling information;

an auction system, accessible by a plurality of participants via the packet-switched network, that based at least in part on the poster seller-specified category designation and auction scheduling information received prior to initiation of the auction automatically presents an item for auction by providing a mark-up language page of information corresponding to an item that is available for auction during a specified time, the mark-up language page of information including an indication of the item's category;

wherein the auction system executes an auction process corresponding to the item based at least in part on scheduling information received from the poster of the item, receives bids from one or more of the participants over the packet-switched network and terminates the auction when one or more predetermined criteria are satisfied; and

wherein the auction system transmits to a selected auction participant information about where the selected auction participant should submit payment information for the auctioned item.

44. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43 wherein the auction system is configured to refuse bids after the one or more predetermined criteria have been satisfied.

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45. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43 wherein the auction system comprises a web page server interface for receiving bids from auction participants connected to the auction system via the world wide web.

46. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43 wherein the auction system receives payment information with each bid.

47. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 46 wherein the auction system receives payment information identifying a credit card account, and transmits the credit card account information to a remote verification system before processing the bid.

48. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 47 wherein the auction system selects a bid based on the one or more predetermined criteria, processes the credit card account for the amount of the bid, and transfers legal ownership of the item to the participant that submitted the bid.

49. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented auction participation system, in communication with an auction processor that processes bids for items being auctioned, for enabling participation in an online auction over a packet-switched network, the auction participation system comprising:

an auction ~~data page~~ recipient means that receives from an item poster via a server at the auction processor ~~data a page~~ containing information about at least one item being auctioned, the received ~~data page~~ including auction scheduling information and a designation of an item category with which the at least one item being auctioned is associated, the item category being specified by a poster of the item;

an auction process ~~means~~ for conducting an internet-based auction of the item based at least in part on the poster-specified item category and the auction scheduling information received from the poster of the item prior to inception of the auction;

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bid input means for enabling a participant to input a bid for submission to the auction processor via the packet-switched network;

bid award receiving means for receiving an indication that the bid was awarded to the participant; and

payment information input means for enabling the participant to input payment information in response to receiving a bid award.

50. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 49 wherein the auction page receiving means comprises a web browser system that accesses a server at the auction processor to receive the page.

51-52. (Canceled)

53. (Previously Presented) The system of claim ~~52~~ 49 wherein the auction participation system selects a bid based on one or more predetermined criteria, processes the credit card account for the amount of the bid and transfers legal ownership of the item to the participant that submitted the bid.

54. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented system for facilitating commerce at an internet-based auction, the system comprising:

an auction node for ~~item receiving means for~~ receiving from one or more auction user ~~poster~~ participants information regarding an item to be electronically presented ~~posted~~ for an auction, the received information including auction scheduling information and a user poster-specified designation of a category, selected from a list of categories, under which the item is to be auctioned;

an auction processor at the auction node ~~or means~~ for processing information received by the auction node ~~item receiving means~~ and presenting the processed information in a format to be transmitted to auction participants over a packet-switched network, the format including an indication of the category of the item to be auctioned, the auction ~~processor means~~ process including an autonomous ascending bid auction process ~~means for~~ executing an auction ~~process~~

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for the item based at least in part on the user poster-specified category designation and auction scheduling information received from the auction user participants poster of the item prior to inception of the auction; and

bid receiving means for receiving bids for the item presented to auction participants.

55. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of facilitating internet auctions, the method comprising:

receiving, at a computer system programmed to receive information over a communication network, information from a auction poster including (i) information about an item to be posted for auction, and (ii) input relating to scheduling an auction for the item, the auction item information including a poster-specified selection of a predetermined category, the predetermined category selected by the poster from a predetermined list of categories maintained on by the computer system;

based on at least a portion of the information received from a poster, generating a unique item identifier by a program executing on the computer system;

notifying the poster of the unique item identifier generated in response to receiving information about the item to be auctioned;

based at least in part on the poster-specified category selection and the auction scheduling input received from the auction posted prior to initiation of the auction, auctioning the item at the computer system with an autonomous auction process program, the autonomous auction process program indicating the predetermined category selected by the poster and identifying the item to be auctioned;

presenting the auction to a plurality of auction participants via the communication network in response to a request to display information about the item to be auctioned, the request to display the item's information being processed by a computer program executing on the computer system; and

receiving at the computer system at least one bid on the item being auctioned, the computer system updating a display of the item's information in response to receipt of the at least one bid.

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56-63. (Canceled)

64. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the information received from the poster further comprises an item subcategory, selected by the poster from a list of item subcategories, under which the item is to be offered for auction.

65. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the information received from a poster comprises a verbal description of the item or a graphical depiction of the item or both.

66. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the information received from the poster comprises a verbal description of the item, the verbal description including subjective information supplied by the poster.

67. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 66 wherein the subjective information includes one or more of following: condition of the item being offered for auction, authenticity of the item being offered for auction or special features of the item being offered for auction.

68. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein, prior to supplying information, the poster registers to sell items for auction.

69. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 68 wherein registering the poster comprises receiving identity information from the poster.

70. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 68 wherein registering the poster comprises receiving financial information from the poster.

71. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 68 wherein registering the poster comprises opening a debit / credit account for the poster.

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72. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71 further comprising debiting the poster's account by an amount corresponding to a poster's fee.

73. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71 further comprising crediting the poster's account by an amount corresponding to the purchase price of an item sold at auction.

74. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the poster logs into the auction computer system from a computing platform in order to provide information about an item to be auctioned.

75. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 74 wherein the poster's computing platform comprises a personal computer, a workstation, a cable set-top device, a video game system or a portable computing device.

76. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein an auction participant logs into the auction computer system from a computing platform in order to browse or bid on items offered for auction.

77. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76 wherein the auction participant's computing platform comprises a personal computer, a workstation, a cable set-top device, a video game system or a portable computing device.

78. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the poster-provided information includes a reserve price for the item to be auctioned.

79. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 78 wherein the poster's reserve price is not revealed to auction participants.

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80. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein prior to bidding on an item an auction participant browses the predetermined list of categories to search for desired items on which to place bids.

81. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the poster ships an item purchased at auction to a destination specified by the purchasing auction participant.

82. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the poster-provided information includes an indication from the poster whether the item offered for auction is to be advertised to potential bidders.

83. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 82 wherein the advertisement appears on a main web page maintained by the auction computer system.

84. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 83 wherein the main web page comprises a welcome page.

85. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 further comprising notifying an auction participant that a bid by that participant has been accepted.

86. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein an auction participant makes electronic payment for an item purchased at auction.

87. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 86 wherein an auction participant makes electronic payment by providing credit card or debit card information.

88. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 86 wherein an auction participant makes electronic payment by transferring an accounting for funds from an account maintained for the auction participant and accessible to the computer-implemented auction system.

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89. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 86 wherein an auction participant makes electronic payment using e-money.

90. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the poster-provided information includes a specified time period for the auction.

91. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the auction process program indicates an opening bid for an item offered for auction.

92. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the auction process program indicates a current bid for an item offered for auction.

93. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein presenting the auction to the plurality of auction participants comprises displaying one or more of the following: a verbal description of the item offered for auction, a graphical depiction of the item offered for auction, or bid information relating to the item offered for auction.

94. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein presenting the auction to the plurality of auction participants further comprises displaying advertisements to the plurality of users.

95. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 94 wherein the displayed advertisements relate to items offered for auction.

96. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 94 wherein the displayed advertisements relate to an advertisement administered by a central operating authority goods/
services offered by a third party.

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97. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the computer system updates the display of the item's information each time a bid higher than the current bid is received.

98. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 further comprising obtaining an auction participant's assent to terms of sale before accepting bids from that auction participant.

99. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 98 wherein the auction participant's assent is supplied via the Internet.

100-132. (Canceled)

133. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of facilitating Internet internet-based electronic auctions, the method comprising:

receiving information from a poster of an item to be auctioned, the information including (i) information identifying the item to be auctioned and designating an item category selected by the poster from a list of item categories, and (ii) input relating to scheduling an auction for the item;

storing at least a portion of the received information in a database of information relating to items to be auctioned;

mapping at least a portion of the received information stored in the database into a presentation format that includes the identifying information and the item category provided by the poster;

displaying the presentation format to a plurality of buyers;

based at least in part on the poster-selected item category and auction scheduling input received from the poster prior to initiation of the auction, conducting an online auction for the item including receiving bids on the item from one or more of the plurality of buyers; and

terminating the online auction of the item based on a predetermined condition.

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134. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 further comprising notifying a winning buyer that a bid submitted by the winning buyer was a winning bid.

135. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein the information received from the poster identifying the item to be auctioned includes at least one of an item title and an item description.

136. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 135 wherein the item description includes an electronic image of the item.

137. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein receiving information from a poster further comprises receiving information designating an item subcategory selected by the poster from among a list of item subcategories.

138. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein the predetermined condition based on which the online auction is terminated comprises an occurrence of an auction termination time.

139. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein receiving information from a poster further comprises receiving a reserve price for the item to be auctioned.

140. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 139 wherein the predetermined condition based on which the online auction is terminated comprises an occurrence of the reserve price being met.

141. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 134 wherein notifying the winning buyer comprises sending the winning buyer an e-mail message.

142. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 further comprising notifying the poster of an outcome of the online auction.

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143. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 142 wherein notifying the poster comprises sending the poster an e-mail message.

144. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 143 wherein the poster is notified of the winning buyer's identity.

145. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein receiving information from the poster of the item to be auctioned further comprises receiving input relating to an advertisement for the item.

146. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of facilitating Internet-based electronic auctions, the method comprising:

receiving information via the Internet from poster's of items to be auctioned, each poster providing (i) information describing an item to be auctioned and designating an item category and an item subcategory selected by the poster from a list of item categories and subcategories, and (ii) input relating to scheduling an auction for the item;

storing at least a portion of the received information in a database of information relating to items to be auctioned;

displaying the list of item categories and subcategories via the Internet to a plurality of potential buyers, each potential buyer being able to browse the item categories and subcategories selectively to navigate to or search for a desired item offered for auction; and

for each item to be auctioned the computer programming: (i) mapping the received information stored in the database corresponding to the item into a presentation format that includes the identifying information and the item category provided by the item's poster; (ii) displaying the presentation format to a plurality of buyers; (iii) based at least in part of the item category and subcategory information and auction scheduling input previously received from a poster, conducting an autonomous online auction for the item including receiving bids on the item from one or more of the plurality of buyers; and (iv) terminating the online auction of the item based on a predetermined condition.

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147. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 or 26 wherein the communication handler program comprises a Unix daemon.

148. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to an auction duration.

149. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to one or both of an auction starting time and an auction ending time.

150. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

151. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the received auction scheduling input consists of an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

152. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be invoked by the poster manually.

153. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be initiated at a future time.

154. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to an auction duration.

155. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to one or both of an auction starting time and an auction ending time.

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156. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

157. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the received auction scheduling input consists of an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

158. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be invoked by the poster manually.

159. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be initiated at a future time.

160. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to an auction duration.

161. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33 wherein the received scheduling input relates to one or both of an auction starting time and an auction ending time.

162. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be started immediately.

163. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33 wherein the received scheduling input consists of an indication that the auction process is to be started immediately.

164. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be invoked by the poster manually.

165. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 33 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be initiated at a future time.

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166. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 40 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to an auction duration.

167. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 40 wherein the received scheduling input relates to one or both of an auction starting time and an auction ending time.

168. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 40 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be started immediately.

169. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 40 wherein the received scheduling input consists of an indication that the auction process is to be started immediately.

170. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 40 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be invoked by the poster manually.

171. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 40 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be initiated at a future time.

172. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to an auction duration.

173. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43 wherein the received scheduling input relates to one or both of an auction starting time and an auction ending time.

174. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be started immediately.

175. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43 wherein the received scheduling input consists of an indication that the auction process is to be started immediately.

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176. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be invoked by the poster manually.

177. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be initiated at a future time.

178. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 49 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to an auction duration.

179. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 49 wherein the received scheduling input relates to one or both of an auction starting time and an auction ending time.

180. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 49 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

181. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 49 wherein the received scheduling input consists of an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

182. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 49 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be invoked by the poster manually.

183. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 49 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be initiated at a future time.

184. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 54 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to an auction duration.

185. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 54 wherein the received scheduling input relates to one or both of an auction starting time and an auction ending time.

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186. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 54 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be started immediately.

187. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 54 wherein the received scheduling input consists of an indication that the auction process is to be started immediately.

188. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 54 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be invoked by the poster manually.

189. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43 wherein the received scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction process is to be initiated at a future time.

190. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to an auction duration.

191. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to one or both of an auction starting time and an auction ending time.

192. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

193. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the received auction scheduling input consists of an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

194. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be invoked by the poster manually.

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195. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be initiated at a future time.

196. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to an auction duration.

197. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to one or both of an auction starting time and an auction ending time.

198. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

199. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein the received auction scheduling input consists of an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

200. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be invoked by the poster manually.

201. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be initiated at a future time.

202. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 146 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to an auction duration.

203. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 146 wherein the received auction scheduling input relates to one or both of an auction starting time and an auction ending time.

204. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 146 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

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205. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 146 wherein the received auction scheduling input consists of an indication that the auction is to be started immediately.

206. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 146 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be invoked by the poster manually.

207. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 146 wherein the received auction scheduling input comprises an indication that the auction is to be initiated at a future time.

208 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein the predetermined condition is defined at least in part by the received auction scheduling input.

209. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43 wherein the one or more predetermined criteria are defined at least in part by the received scheduling input.

210. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 133 wherein the predetermined condition is defined at least in part by the received auction scheduling input.

211. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 146 wherein the predetermined condition is defined at least in part by the received auction scheduling input.

212-218. (Canceled)

219. (New) A computer-based auction apparatus for facilitating Internet-based auctions where the computer based auction apparatus is under a central operating authority's control, the auction apparatus comprising:

(a) a computer system in communication with the internet and capable of executing a plurality of substantially simultaneous processes;

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(b) one or more processes executing on the computer system to perform the following:

- (i) receive from a remote program executing on a computer system independently operated by a seller, information describing an item offered for auction, the information containing a short title for the item, a textual description of the item, a digital image of the item, and an identification of the selling entity that is posting the item for auction;
- (ii) initiate an autonomous auction instance based on information received from the selling entity describing an item offered for auction by the selling entity;
- (iii) maintain a data structure to verify a bidder from the internet is an authorized remote electronic bidding participant in the computer based auction apparatus; and
- (iv) terminate the autonomous auction instance based on predetermined auction termination criteria.

220. (New) The auction apparatus of claim 219 wherein the initiated autonomous auction instance comprises an independent auction instance executing substantially simultaneously with a plurality of other autonomous auction instances.

221. (New) The auction apparatus of claim 219 wherein the remote program executing on a computer system independently operated by a seller is a remote consignment node user whom created a data record for the item to be auction and electronically presented the item to the auction node.

222. (New) The auction apparatus of claim 219 wherein the remote program executing on a computer system independently operated by a seller is a remote posting terminal user whom created a data record for the item to be auctioned and electronically presented the item to the auction node.

223. (New) The auction apparatus of claim 219 wherein a central operating authority of the auction apparatus policies a network of user participants to impose a performance structure on the network users and the central operating authority revoking the license or franchise to

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electronically present items for auction at the auction apparatus from poor performing or fraudulent users.

224. (New) The computer-implemented system of claim 54 wherein at least one user participant is a remote consignment node user that created a data record for the item to be auction and electronically presented the item to the auction node.

225. (New) The computer-implement system of claim 54 wherein at least one user participant is a remote posting terminal user that created a data record for the time to be auctioned and electronically presented the item to the auction node.

226. (New) The computer-implemented system of claim 54 wherein a central operating authority of the auction node policies a network of user participants to impose a performance structure on the network users and the central operating authority revoking the license or franchise to electronically present items for auction at the auction node from poor performing or fraudulent users.